

Esthonia

The Baltic State & Its Unconquerable People

By Florence Farmborough

Special Correspondent of "The Times"

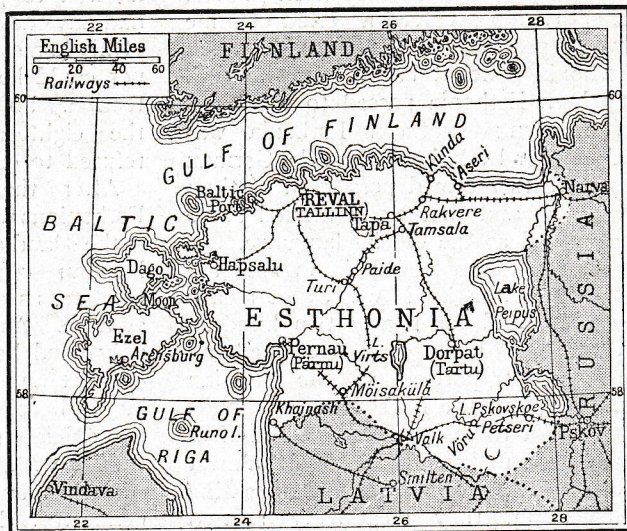
FROM early times the region now known as Esthonia, or Eesti, as the natives call it, has been the possession of one people. Finnish by descent, it is generally supposed they found their way into Europe on a wave of Asiatic migration, about the fifth and sixth century. Certain of these emigrant Finnish tribes settled in the north, in the country now called Finland; others in the south, in the territory which became known as Estland, or Esthland. Before they finally settled on their own coast, next door to the Finns, the Ests (Ehsts, or Esths, the aboriginal Esthonians) appear to have harried and infested the shores of Scandinavia, and their exploits as sea-rovers and pirates caused them to be feared by all dwellers on the borders of the Baltic.

The people of Western Europe have a vague notion that the inhabitants of the Baltic States, Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are of the same race, speak the same language, and have the same national characteristics. One has, however, only to go among them to find out how misleading that impression is. The three peoples are of different origin, speak different languages, and are marked by totally different qualities.

So far as landscape and tillage of the soil are concerned, the Baltic States appear to possess common characteristics. They were originally covered by forests, mainly of fir and pine, but these have been cut down extensively in Lithuania,

and more extensively still in Esthonia and in Lettland. Each State abounds in marshes, and each has for the most part a light soil.

The history of Esthonia is chequered, fraught with many vicissitudes. Until about seven hundred years ago, according to Esthonian writers, the country was free and self-governing, but in the early part of the thirteenth century it was overrun by Danes and Germans, who proceeded to parcel it out among themselves. Some years later the Danes sold their share of the booty to the Germans, who, in addition to the southern half of Esthonia, had possessed themselves of Livonia. These were known as the Teutonic Knights, one of those Orders of so-called Chivalry which managed to mingle sentiment and business together to their own complete satisfaction. They united Esthonia and Livonia, ruled for about two hundred years, and acquired great prosperity. Meanwhile the condition of the native



ESTHONIA: MAP OF THE REPUBLIC

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HIS FAVOURITE DIVERSION AFTER THE DAY'S WORK

Despite his hoary head, the innate vigour of this old Estonian fisherman will not sanction his retirement from the calling of his early boyhood. After a few tunes on the quaint musical instrument, he will pick up the discarded pipe and tobacco-pouch and, seated by his life-time crony, will discuss the wondrous happenings which secured freedom for his country and crowned his declining years with peace

Photo, Estonian Legation

people was pitiful. Treated as serfs, they had no more rights than domestic animals to-day, and were shown far less consideration. On the dissolution of the Teutonic Order in 1560 the country was again split in half by alien powers. This division involved a period of some twenty years of severe fighting, in which Estonia suffered badly. In the end, northern Estonia passed to the kings of Sweden; southern Estonia was taken over by Poland. But the German landowners retained possession of their property, and German continued to be recognized as the official language.

By its cession to Russia in 1721 the condition of Estonia was by no means bettered, and for nearly two hundred years this little land remained an insignificant portion of the Russian empire. But the Estonians continued to wage a tireless warfare on behalf of their nationality. In spite of almost overwhelming opposition and unceasing persecution, they steadfastly refused to relinquish their national consciousness and never ceased to cherish

the hope of freedom. Meanwhile the German barons continued to practise their arbitrary methods, and the country remained virtually under their control. The Estonians were not allowed to possess land of their own, and any one of them could be turned out of his homestead at a moment's notice, nor could he invoke the law as a protection. So late as the second half of the eighteenth century the barons refused to cease selling their labourers.

After the cession to Russia the Estonians were thus under two masters—the land-owning Germans and the Russian official class. These task-masters, as a rule, were found in close alliance. As the barons possessed the only good houses, and lived usually in comfort and were able to offer a quite lavish hospitality, it was natural that the officials should be willing to make friends with them, and to adopt their contemptuous views of the native peasantry. Now and then, however, the shifting policy of the Tsardom would compel the authorities to favour the

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natives and to snub the barons. The Esthonians never failed to take advantage of such opportunities to improve their methods of agriculture, to push their way into local government, and to extend their hold on commerce. They were determined, too, to secure a proper system of education, for they were preparing themselves consciously, if secretly, for the day when their desire for freedom would be satisfied and they would be left to manage their own affairs.

It seemed in 1905 that the day had come. Russia was seething with a

revolutionary spirit. The Tsardom had been disgraced by its scandalous and feeble management of the war against Japan. In many places the peasants rose and attacked the barons, burned their castles, chased them and their families over the frontiers, and attempted to seize the land.

They did a great deal of mischief to their cause as well as to their oppressors. The risings were put down savagely; the Esthonians were worse off than before. Yet they were not discouraged. They had forty newspapers



ESTHONIA'S HOPE IN HER RISING GENERATION

The establishment of the Republic has wrought many changes in the life of the Esthonian people. A happier life than that of this peasant-farmer is undoubtedly awaiting his little grandson, who, with head pressed caressingly against the crude farm implement, seems to indicate his determination to devote his energy to the soil of Esthonia, from which he is justly proud to have sprung

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in their own language, and with these they kept the national spirit active. But not until 1917, when the Russian revolution had brought about the complete downfall of the Tsarist régime, were they able to manifest their strength. The Russian Provisional Government granted them autonomy, and the decree to that effect, issued in April, 1917, restored northern Livonia to Esthonia,

Despite this rebuff the National Government, with Constantin Paets at its head, continued to hold its own, and on Feb. 24, 1918, proclaimed Esthonia an independent republic. Then, however, Germany, anxious to make peace with Soviet Russia, marched into Livonia and Esthonia, captured Reval, and thence threatened Petrograd. Lenin was compelled to come to terms, and by



DISTINCTIVE PERSONAL ADORNMENTS OF ESTHONIA

The large breast buckle is the all-important and the most interesting of the various silver trinkets which add such an original touch of beauty to the otherwise simple national dress of the peasant-woman. The custom of wearing this novel and striking ornament, generally finely chased and embossed, dates back innumerable years, and figures in many old pictures of the Esthonian peasantry

Photo, Esthonian Legation

which thereby recovered its former ethnic frontier on the south.

A National Council was elected by universal suffrage, and a National Government, staffed only by Esthonians, was set up in the following July at Tallinn (Reval), the capital town. Later in the year, when it had been decided to hold a Constituent Assembly, the Bolsheviks, who by this time had seized supreme power in Russia, brought about the dissolution of the National Council.

the Treaty of Brest Litovsk, Esthonia and Livonia were to be evacuated by the Bolsheviks and policed by the Germans. The Baltic barons, who had bitterly resented being ignored by the Esthonians in their choice of ministers for the National Government, hailed this development with unrestrained joy, and the situation promised to become serious for Esthonian freedom.

Hemmed in on all sides by German opposition, for the Baltic barons had



MODELS OF INDUSTRY AND WOMANLY TIDINESS

A good deal of the manual work at home and in the fields falls to the share of these Estonian women, who dwell in the neighbourhood of Lihula, and the firewood stacked so neatly in the background speaks of a labour that demands both patience and physical endurance. But there is one day in the week when, arrayed in Sunday-best, they may sit at ease beside their cottage doors

Photo, Estonian Legation



OLD TIME ESTHONIAN COSTUMES THAT HAVE BEEN ALMOST SUPERSEDED BY MODERN FASHIONS

Handiwork has always flourished in the homes of the Esthonian peasantry, but the beautiful old country costumes, rich in embroidery and gay with trinkets, have been replaced by more modern and decidedly less attractive garments. The handsome costumes seen in this photograph are now almost obsolete, but a certain type of national dress is still in existence in the Petseri district, and the inhabitants of the several islands belonging to Esthonia continue to cling with praiseworthy pertinacity to the prettily-coloured and beaded attire of an earlier generation

Photo, Esthonian Legation

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made the most of the opportunity which they hoped would restore to them their former prestige as owners of two-thirds of the land, and had given the German military officials their full support, the Paets Government appealed to the Allied Powers. Great Britain was the first to realize the necessity for intervention on their behalf, and accorded them recognition as a *de facto* independent government on May 3, 1918; and before the end of the month Esthonia was recognized as a *de facto* independent State by both France and Italy.

It was not, however, until the German power had been shattered on the battlefields of the Western Front that the German soldiers were recalled from Esthonia. But the evacuation of the troops was effected in such a manner as to afford every possible opportunity for the invasion of the country by the Bolsheviks, who swarmed across the frontier, pillaging and murdering as they advanced.

Resistance to Bolshevik Invasion

The Baltic barons openly sided with the Bolsheviks, and they were supported by Germany. But just as steadfastly as the Esthonians had stood up for their rights against the Germans, so now did they exert their energies to check the advance of the invaders, and to save their country from the blight of Bolshevism.

Much could be written of the stout resistance and wonderful patriotism of the handful of Esthonian soldiers who, poorly-clad, poorly-fed, and for the most part quite untrained, rallied in such magnificent manner round the national flag. But help was at hand. In December, 1918, a British fleet under Admiral Sinclair made its appearance at Reval, carrying military stores; and, shortly afterwards, Finland, already an independent republic, came to the assistance of her kinsmen with men, munitions, and money.

This timely aid brought considerable relief to the native people so hard-beset, and before the end of February, 1919, the Bolsheviks had been driven beyond the frontier. After a brief

respite new attempts to invade the country were made, but were repulsed, and less than a year later an armistice was signed. On Feb. 2, 1920, peace was concluded, the full independence of Esthonia being recognized by the Soviet Government, and to-day Esthonia, after one of the longest struggles for national freedom on record, is numbered among the free nations of Europe.

Records of Esthonia's Troubled Past

Before passing from this brief historical survey of Esthonia to the brighter and more promising conditions of the country at the present day, it would seem fitting to emphasise that the deplorable condition of the Esthonians in past times had not escaped the notice of other European nations. The accumulation of chronicled material in this connexion is surprisingly great, but it must suffice to make mention of three instances which deal directly with the matter in question. One of the first to become aware of the sorry condition of these people was the Polish king, Stefan Bathory, who, in 1561, when taking over Livonia, the southern part of Esthonia, openly asserted that of all the oppressed races of the world, the Esthonians under their despotic rulers had experienced the greatest sufferings and humiliations.

Demonstration of Papal Sympathy

So widely spread were the rumours of this pitiless persecution that they reached the Pope's ears, and more than once in his indignation did he admonish the rulers of the Esthonians, but to no effect. It is to this period that Jodocus Crull, the German physician and writer, who spent many years of his life in England, where some of his most important works were written, alludes when describing the Esthonians in his book, "*The Antient and Present State of Muscovy*," published in 1698: "They are the greatest Slaves in the World, but it is alledged against them, that if they were not kept under such a severe Subjection they would be always endeavouring to recover their Liberty,



NETTING AS A NECESSARY HOME CRAFT OF FISHERFOLK

The household duties accomplished, the fisherman's wife attends to the nets that play such an important rôle in the homes of the shore-dwelling peasantry, for sea-fishing affords them more than a partial livelihood. Along the jagged sea-coast they build shelters for their implements; and fishing also forms the chief occupation of a large number of Esthonians living in the vicinity of Lake Peipus

of which they have given some Proofs, when ever any Occasion presented."

The period during which the entire land, both North and South Esthonia, was under Swedish rule forms the only respite in this cruel oppression, and to this day that régime is spoken of as the "good Swedish times." The condition of the people was then considerably ameliorated, and the power of the German knights and nobles greatly reduced, they having been deprived of their so-called privileges, one of the chief of which was the right to issue sentence of death over the peasants (*jus vitæ et necis*).

But night again enveloped the country when it passed into the hands of the Russian Tsars, and slavery of the worst type may be said to mark this era. The following report issued in 1735 to the

Russian Government by Baron Rosen, a Baltic Baron and Land Councillor (*residierender Landrat*), is eloquent of the antagonism manifested towards the peasants by the German nobility:

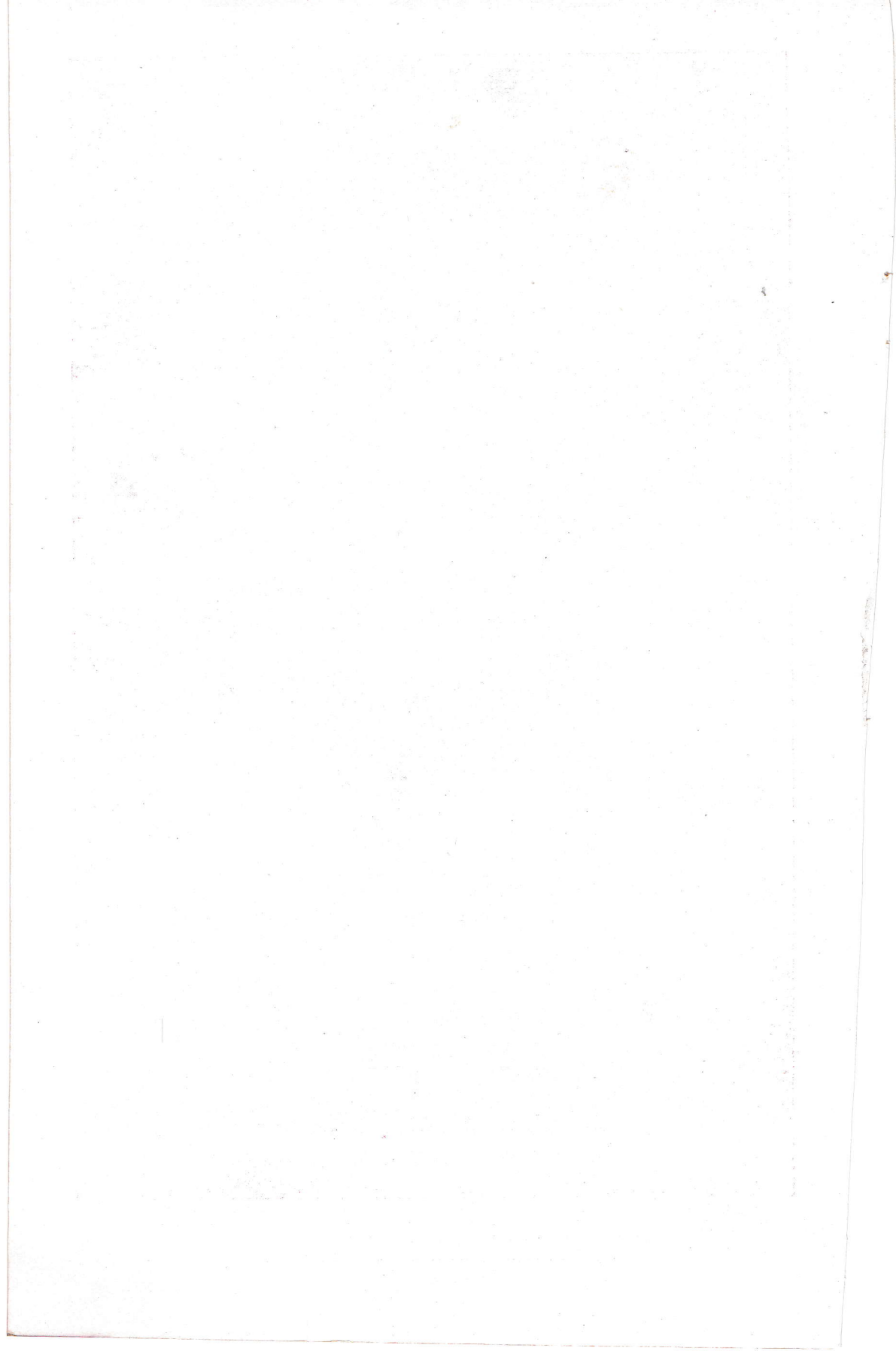
- I. The peasants belong body and soul to, and are the property of, the landowner.
- II. They may not own property, but may only collect it for their lord, who has right to dispose of same at will.
- III. There is no limit to the landowner's power in respect of taxation of the peasants, or of the degree of their slavery.
- IV. According to the will of their lord the peasants are to receive punishment, against which no appeal can be made.

In 1816, a year worthy of mention,



ESTHONIA: GIRL-BRIDE FROM OESEL ISLAND

A dainty figure is this bride of the people, posing demurely for her portrait, fully aware that her nuptial finery with the quaint headdress, almost Eastern in its dimensions, is not unbecoming





ESTHONIAN "MARGUERITE" AT HER SPINNING-WHEEL

Woollens are in great request on the island of Oesel, or Saaremaa, as the name is in Esthonian, where the winds are rough and piercing for several months of the year. During the warm days of summer this comely young housewife is often seen sitting outside her humble home in the sunshine, spinning the wool that is to provide warm garments for herself and family

Photo, Esthonian Legation



OPEN-AIR LAUNDRY OF THE ESTHONIAN PEASANT WOMEN

Peasant washerwomen, such as these, prefer the river to the most up-to-date washtub. The women of the mainland have little liking for bright colours and gaudy trinkets, and their sobriety of dress is in striking contrast to the brilliant costumes worn by the islanders; but the art of needlework flourishes and embroideries of much artistic beauty are produced

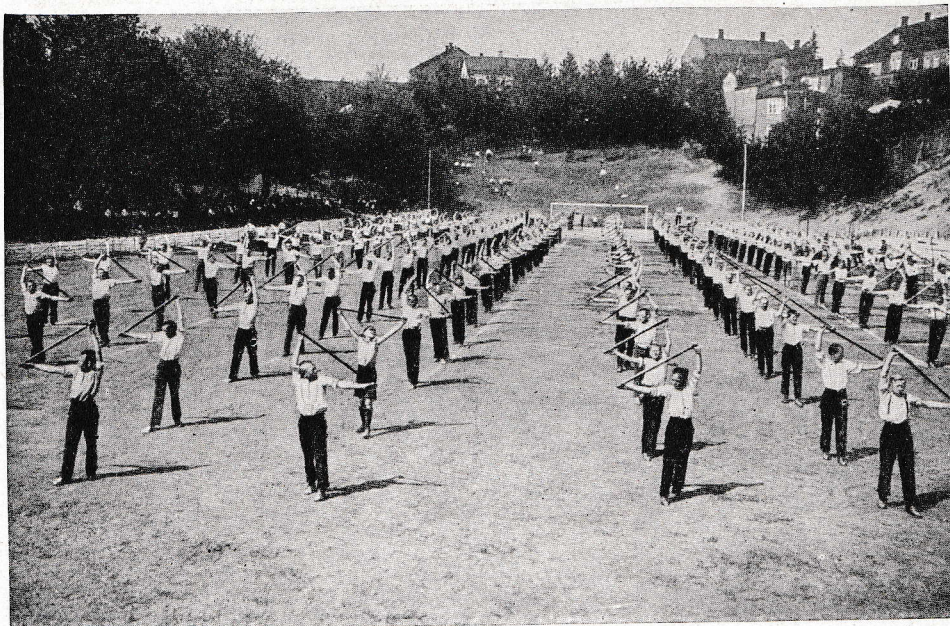
slavery of the peasants was formally abolished, nevertheless, their property and belongings were declared annexed by the barons, and, according to the words of one of the land-owning aristocrats: "The complete conquest and subjugation of the land was brought to a finish by the German barons in the year 1816." Not until nearly fifty years later were laws passed which accorded to the Estonians the privilege of buying land for themselves.

One does not usually look for an exuberance of racial vitality in a people who had been bound in serfdom to

foreign powers for hundreds of years, whose goings and comings had been ordered by hostile super-lords, and whose very existence had been continuously in the hands of merciless tyrants; yet in the history of Estonia we have one of those instances—the Great War brought to light not a few of them, that of Czechoslovakia among the number—where a nation, holding its own against overwhelming odds, had from generation to generation passed on the great hope, without which it would have been utterly wiped out—the hope of one day regaining its freedom.



HARD WORK DONE CHEERFULLY AT THE THREE-LEGGED WASHTUB
Her cheerfulness never forsakes her, for the Estonian housewife is a born manager, and is never so happy as when she is cleaning the interior of her little wooden home or scrubbing the family linen in the primitive washtub. And she is often heard singing over her work, for her store of songs is unlimited and helps her to beguile the longest day



OPEN-AIR GYMNASIUM DURING DRILL DISPLAY

On this spacious ground many sons of Esthonia have received their first instruction in gymnastic exercises. Esthonian names are now beginning to figure on the list of champions in the world of sport, for the athletic propensities of the Esthonian are developing rapidly, and he realizes that soundness of body spells soundness of mind, both important factors in the building up of a nation.



WHERE PHYSICAL SKILL IS PUT TO THE TEST

The training in the Esthonian officers' school embraces all branches of military discipline. Everything tending towards the promotion of physical fitness is given a front place. Here, in the courtyard, groups of the men have assembled for drill, while in the foreground a few devotees of the sword are practising fencing, good swordsmanship being naturally essential to military training.

Photos, Esthonian Legation

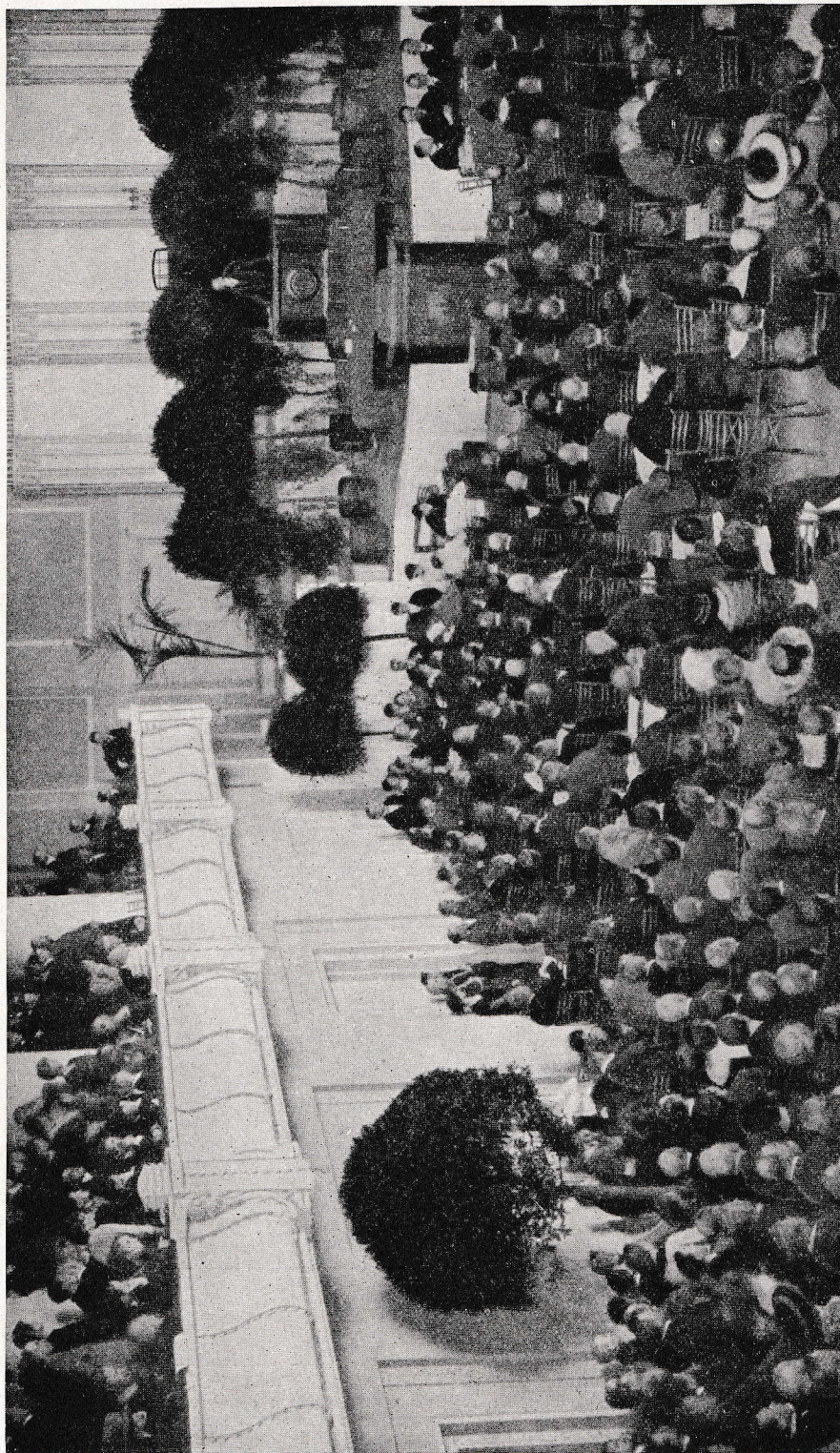


STALWART MEMBER OF ESTHONIA'S FLYING FORCE

Round the new national flag of Esthonia the pick of the young strength of the Republic is mustered. The miniature navy has no lack of able young seamen, the army is 15,000 strong, and a fine body of men is attached to the air force. This is a type of Esthonian airman; determination is written on his face.

"For Valour" is written on the small cross on his breast

Photo, Esthonian Legation



LAYING THE FOUNDATION OF A STATE: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF ESTHONIA IN SESSION

To carry on a war of life and death, and at the same time to build up a State, would seem almost beyond human possibility. Yet Esthonia accomplished this gigantic task. A Coalition Government, an outcome of the Esthonian Diet, took over the administration in the summer of 1917, and having proclaimed her sovereignty and established her own political life, Esthonia set up a Constituent Assembly which, in June, 1920, passed the Constitution of the Republic

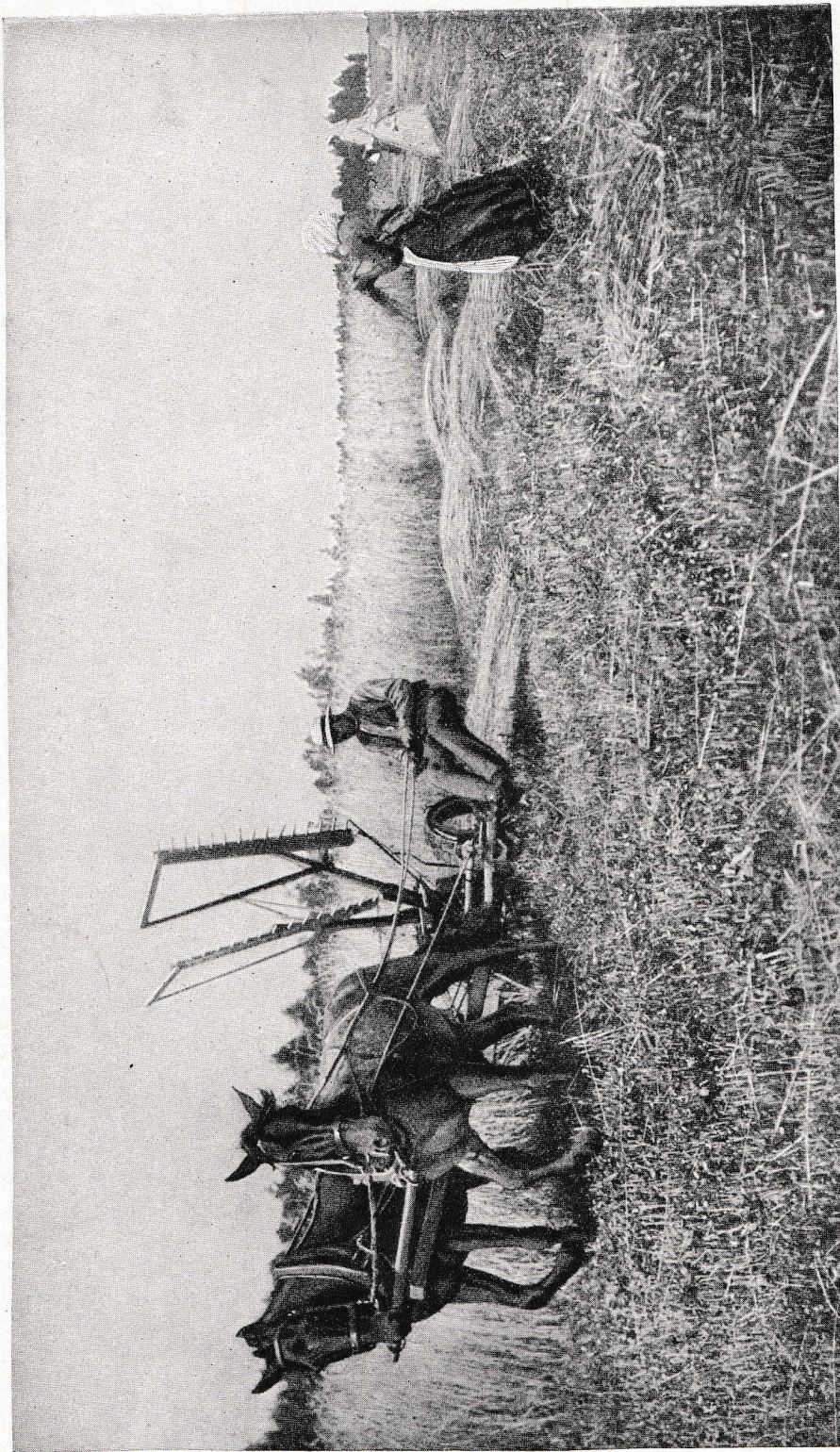
Photo, Esthonian Legation



GIRL SCHOLARS OF AN AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL DANCING DURING THE HOUR OF RECREATION

Fifty years ago the Esthonian people were eager to establish agricultural schools for themselves, but it was not until 1914 that the Russian Government gave its permission, and that only on condition that the training should be conducted in the Russian language. At the present day some twenty public agricultural schools are to be found in the country, many of which have a four years' course, six months of each year being devoted to the theoretical part of the schoolwork

Photo, Esthonian Legation



REAPING THE RYE HARVEST ON A PEASANT FARMER'S HOLDING IN THE DISTRICT OF DORPAT (TARTU)
 Rye is extensively cultivated in Esthonia and forms one of the principal crops of the country. Important changes have been brought about by the Land Reform Act, and in the place of the large estate-holders a class of small landowners has been created. The land is receiving careful attention at the hands of these native farmers who have still many difficulties to cope with, chief among them being, perhaps, the lack of agricultural implements and machines

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It was towards the middle of the nineteenth century that a new element found expression in the country. An educated class of Esthonian, an intelligentsia, began to exercise its influence, and it was to this class that the masses of the people turned for support when, as a result of the recent Russian revolution, the administration of the country passed over to them. Profound thinkers, many of them cultured men of the world, no finer diplomats could have been chosen; and these were the representatives of the people who have so successfully directed the nation's fortunes in the face of such stupendous difficulties.

During the struggle with Bolshevist Russia the Esthonians never ceased to carry on the building up of the Republic, and on the conclusion of peace the work of reconstruction went forward by leaps and bounds. Their position now

secure, the people collaborated wholeheartedly to further the economic development of their country. They set to work to get their finances in order, and for some time past have been able to balance their budget. The Constitution of the Esthonian Republic, passed by the Constituent Assembly in June, 1920, has been in force since December of that year.

The Esthonian system of education is admirable. From the elementary schools, which number well over 1,200, promising boys and girls pass to grammar schools, and thence to the University of Dorpat (Tartu), which is once more doing work worthy of its long and famous history, and has 3,500 undergraduates on its roll. This university, founded in 1632 by Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, was reopened in 1919 as an Esthonian seat of learning, and is supported by the government. Elementary education is



OLD BUT EAGER FOR THE WORK OF RECONSTRUCTION

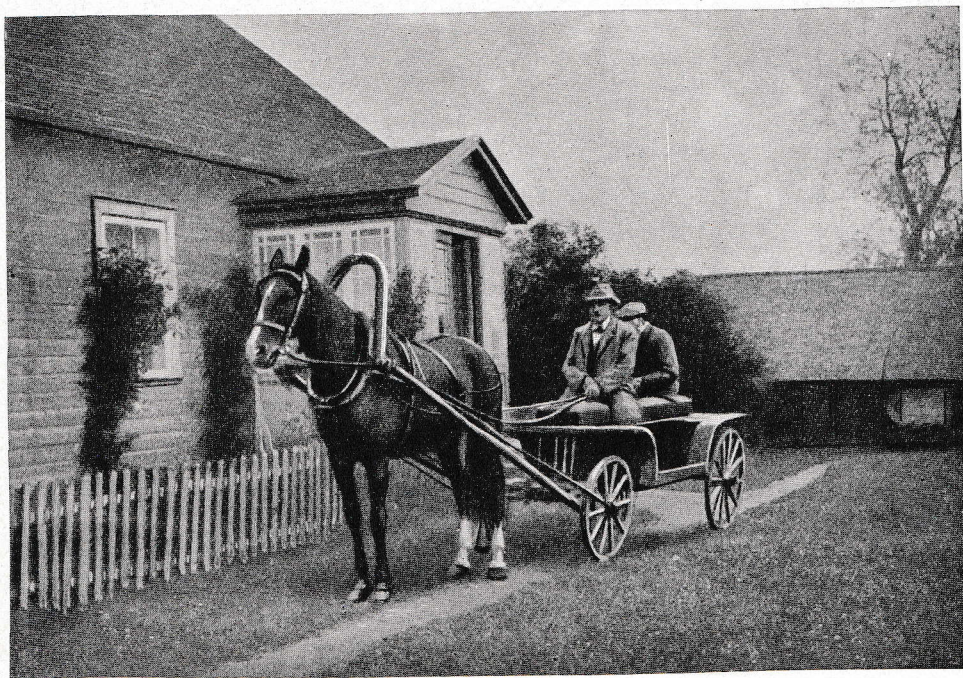
He is made of unconquerable stuff. In his veins runs the blood of a race whose spirit of nationality Danes, Swedes, Germans, and Russians vainly tried to subdue. This old Esthonian, grown grey under Russian skies, hearing that Esthonia had received her freedom, packed his goods on a wheelbarrow, and returned to his native country, there to lend a hand in building up the new Republic

Photo, Florence Farmborough



HOW THE SHEEP IS SHORN OF ITS FLEECE IN ESTHONIA

Despite numerous war-pilferings and appropriations, Esthonia still possesses large stocks of domestic animals, including cows, horses, sheep, and pigs. Women and girls take a prominent part in tending this livestock, and in the sheep-shearing season it is not unusual to see quite a young girl shearing in masterly fashion the coat of wool from an animal which, with legs bound, is stretched across her knees



MODEST HOMESTEAD OF MODERN FARMER

Dotted here and there about the great plains of Esthonia, buildings such as these may be seen. They are the homes of the peasant-farmers to whom the Agrarian Reform Bill has proved of such vital importance. Many of these homes are prettily situated among luxuriant fruit trees. Dairy-farming, bee-keeping, and the care of rabbits and poultry are common among the small landowners

Photo, Esthonian Legation



TOILING IN THE RYE-FIELD IN THE GLARE AND HEAT OF THE DAY

Esthonia is primarily an agricultural country, and about two-thirds of the total population live on the proceeds of agriculture. Naturally intelligent and diligent, the peasant makes the most of his holding, and is repaid by the fine crops which result from his labours. He is an enterprising personality, and his thirst for knowledge makes him eager to follow the world's events in book and newspaper



WHERE THE AGRICULTURIST HAS FULL SCOPE FOR HIS ACTIVITY

An eight-hours day does not appeal to him—while there is work to be done, he is willing to do it. The long winter calls for a certain amount of effort on the part of the Esthonian countryfolk, but they are a vigorous people, and no sooner does the snow, which covers the ground during most of the season, disappear, than they are out in the fields working from early morn until eve

Photos, Esthonian Legation



MERRY COMPANY OF PEASANT MAIDENS OF THE PETSERI DISTRICT

Hand in hand they stand demurely in a circle, with aprons tied correctly under their arms and coloured kerchiefs wound tightly round their heads. As the musician, seen in the centre of the ring with his concertina, plays the opening chords the dance begins, and soon the soft, musical strains are all but lost in the whirl of flying skirts, the stamp of dancing feet, and the gay merriment of these happy Estonian peasant girls

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obligatory and gratuitous; the result of this is that there are hardly any illiterates in the country, while the general level of intelligence is decidedly high. Formerly the education had been conducted in German and Russian; to-day the Esthonian language, which belongs to the Ugro-Finnish branch of languages, is compulsory in all schools. Nevertheless, the minority of the population, Germans, Russians, Swedes, and Letts, are guaranteed education in their mother tongue.

A musical language, differing but little from that of the Finns, which has been described as the "Italian of the North," the difference being similar to that between the Swedish and Danish tongues, the Esthonian language lends itself favourably for song, its richness in double vowels making it very pleasant to the ear, but that it should have been preserved at all is a marvel. Apart from the Reval Esthonian there are two more important varieties of local dialects, but the first-mentioned is now generally accepted as the language of literature, and it is the strong tendency for this one, that is used in writing, to swallow up the other two.

Esthonian Love for Mother Earth

Esthonia is not a land of great beauty or of great wealth, yet its people are devotedly attached to it, and those who have emigrated generally band together in little communities, speak among themselves their own language, and look forward to the day when they will go back to their swampy homeland and cultivate the family farm.

The hunger for actual possession of land has always been acute with the Esthonian, and finding it impossible to satisfy it in his own country, he, in the circumstances, was nothing loath to start life afresh in an alien land, where property might be cheaply purchased and held with security. Russia, Siberia, the United States, and Australia have absorbed a large number of these emigrants, many of whom, however, upon the establishment of the Republic, have returned to their native country.

The Esthonians are a hardy people, and of the three nations who inhabit the Baltic states it is generally held that they have the largest share of vigorous character and the most active minds. They are not a people with much charm of manner, though the more widely educated and travelled class is decidedly attractive, in addition to being energetic and competent.

Business Preferred to Social Amenity

In Russia the Esthonians were not much liked. They kept themselves to themselves, they were too sober and industrious, and they were hard in their business dealings. As a rule, they made money by a trade—a large proportion of the skilled artisans in Petrograd were Esthonians—and put their savings into house property. If one had to settle any affairs with them, they struck one as being uninterested in any but the business aspect of the matter. They give no trouble so long as they are not interfered with, but neither do they take any trouble to be agreeable; yet hospitality is one of their outstanding qualities and, provided they have no cause to mistrust him, the stranger is ever welcome within their gates.

The intellectual as well as the commercial life of Esthonia has its centre at Reval, a popular watering-place and a fine port at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland, practically ice-free, it being inaccessible only to small merchantmen without the aid of ice-breakers for a period of about three weeks.

Capital with a Great Future Before It

Reval, or Tallinn, as it is now known in Esthonian, is a pleasant city, with neat, quick-running cars, and busy streets, and has about 130,000 inhabitants. Founded in 1219, its excellent position as a seaport soon made it one of the most important cities of the Hanseatic League. Its former commercial greatness has in no wise diminished, and its trade is increasing every year, and there can be no doubt but that it will in time prove to be one of the most important seaports of the



FIVE O'CLOCK TEA OF THE ESTHONIAN LABOURER

Like most inhabitants of cold countries these peasants eat and drink a great deal, but their tastes are not exorbitant, and black bread and weak tea form for them quite a satisfying meal. They are, for the most part, endowed with a lively temperament and a keen sense of humour, and a favourite pastime is the recitation of short poems or amusing stories

Photo, Florence Farmborough

Baltic. The town contains numerous relics of the Middle Ages, and history has left its mark on many a crumbling church and castle. The finest grand opera house of the country is in Reval, a truly magnificent structure, completed just before the war, and erected entirely by voluntary contributions of the people. Towards the end of June, Reval is crowded with country folk attending the fair, which lasts ten days. Few picturesque costumes are to be seen; the men wear cloth suits and felt hats; the women go in very little for gay colours. The population of the country is close on 2,000,000, about 96 per cent. of whom are Esthonians; the rest are Germans, Russians, Swedes, Letts, and other nationalities. The religion of nearly five-sixths of the population is Lutheran Protestantism.

Very fond of poetry, the people seem to possess an inborn talent for improvising verses, chiefly of a personal character. Many an old Esthonian peasant-woman,

while unable to read or write, can improvise poetry and relate stories for hours on end without the repetition of a single line or event.

In the eyes of a large percentage of Westerners, Esthonia appears as a country emerging for the first time above the horizon. Yet it has a literature dating back to the seventeenth century, and can rank high for its wealth of songs, tales, and folklore, largely tinged with melancholy and pathos.

There is an Esthonian saying, "Haeda oepetab" (Danger teaches us), and it may be that the very danger which dogged the footsteps of this intrepid people during seven centuries has been an essential factor in the preservation of the nation, and has contributed in no small degree to the building up of the Esthonian character.

A Catholic catechism was the first Esthonian book to be printed. This actually appeared in 1517, and was followed by other devotional works,

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the first complete translation of the Bible appearing in 1739.

No better example of the extreme richness of the traditional literature of the Esthonians could be given than the collection by Dr. J. Hurt of 45,000 popular songs, some 8,000 tales, 52,000 proverbs, 40,000 riddles, and 60,000 items of popular superstition. Apart from this, no fewer than 13,500 folk-melodies have been collected by a society of Esthonian students. Foremost among the "glorified Esthonian peasants uttering their hearts to the world" are the names of Kreutzwald and Koidula; these are the living voices of Esthonia. Frederic Rheinhold Kreutzwald (1803-1882), the son of a peasant, has through his remarkable work, "Kalewipoeg" ("The Son of Kalew"), earned for himself an immortal name in the world of poetry. This great epic poem, which has been compared and is said to be able to rank with the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey," consisting of nearly 20,000

verses, relates the life and deeds of heroism of the national hero Kalewipoeg, presumed to have lived in the twelfth century, not long before the conversion of the Esthonians to Christianity. For many years Kreutzwald carefully collected among the peasants all fragments of songs, legends, and sayings handed down by oral tradition, relating to this hero, and having amassed no fewer than 2,000 varieties, he united them into a vivid, harmonious whole, thereby performing for his country much the same service that Lönnrot, some thirty years previously, had accomplished for Finland in the great Finnish poem "Kalevala."

The poetess Koidula, daughter of J. W. Jannsen, who in 1857 founded the first Esthonian gazette—"Perno Postimees"—made her way into the heart of the Esthonian people by her beautiful works which, describing with a profundity of feeling the grief and misery of her race, have, despite many



CELEBRATING A BIRTHDAY AMONG THE PEASANTRY

Seated to the right of the group is the "leading lady" in whose honour a few guests have assembled. Food and drink are never far away on such occasions, the idea of a party being mainly a succession of meals. So intense was the excitement when the camera appeared that nearly an hour passed before the group was arranged to the complete satisfaction of the birthday heroine

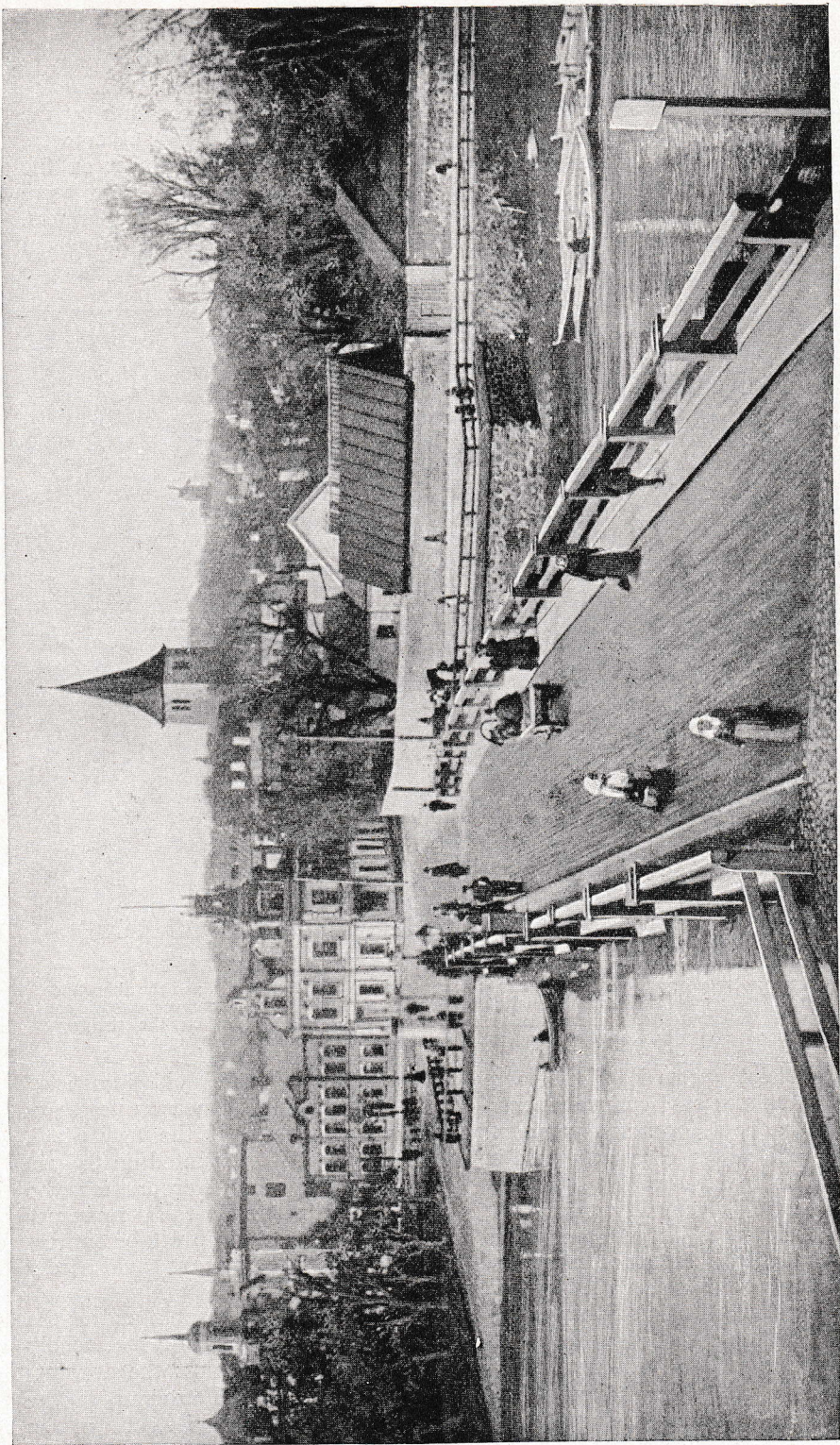
Photo, Florence Farmborough



DRAWING SAD COMFORT FROM FAMILY PRAYER AT THE GRAVESIDE OF A LOVED ONE

In town and hamlet of the Petseri district the devastations of warfare are fast disappearing under the healing hand of Time; but the graveyards remain eloquent of the ravages wrought among human lives. Well for those who have a knowledge of the last resting-place of their lost ones, and who, like this humble family, may seek comfort at a grave, reverently to kneel and whisper prayers for the soul of the departed

Photo, Estonian Legation



STREET LIFE IN THE HISTORIC TOWN OF DORPAT, ESTHONIA'S SEAT OF LEARNING

Dorpat, or Tartu, as the Esthonians now call the town, has for centuries been celebrated for its university, which was founded in 1632 by Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden. During the wars with Russia in the early part of the eighteenth century it took refuge in Sweden, but was reinstated in 1802 by the Russian Emperor, Alexander I. In 1919 the university was reopened as an Esthonian seat of learning, and has now 3,500 students, men and women, on its roll

ESTHONIA & ITS PEOPLE

attempts at imitation, no equal in the language.

Music, too, plays an important rôle in the life of the people. There are many small villages possessing local and musical societies in which a lively interest is taken by both young and old. That the people thoroughly understand the aesthetic value of music and

large farms on a scientific basis. Many of the large estates of the Baltic barons were distributed among the peasants by the Agrarian Reform Bill, 1919; others were taken over by the government on the ground of mismanagement, and were also parcelled out to the native farmers.

The confiscation of estates is spoken of by the Esthonians as "righting a



CHRISTMAS PARTY STARTING OFF FOR A "JOY RIDE"

Owing to their northerly position the Esthonians have a variety of winter sports, and the abundance of snow provides them with a definite sleighing season. Only those who have experienced it can understand the fascination of a country drive in midwinter, when the sleigh skims the crisp snow and silence is everywhere, save for the muffled thud of flying hoofs and the jingle of bells

of art is plainly proved by the large variety of first-class entertainments, including modern operas, symphony concerts, and ballets, constantly held in nearly all Esthonian towns.

The climate is generally temperate, but the winter is longer and more severe than in either Latvia or Lithuania. To make up for the long, cold winter, the summer is usually hot, although this warm weather is of very short duration. The chief crops are flax, rye, oats, barley, and potatoes. Clover and timothy grass provide excellent fodder for the cattle. Agriculture is the chief occupation, and is worked on almost all the

seven hundred years' old injustice." It is also defended as a measure necessary to the building up of the new State, that is to say, it is counted on to gain the support of peasant proprietors, who have a solid interest in the permanence of the republic, and who will be entirely loyal to it, as the Germans could hardly be.

The Germans of Esthonia and of the other Baltic States are in a melancholy position. They have lost the appointments they held in Petrograd, in the Russian diplomatic service, and in the Tsar's army and navy. Whenever in pre-war Russia one came across an



IN A COTTAGE COURTYARD ON THE ISLAND OF MOON (MUHI)

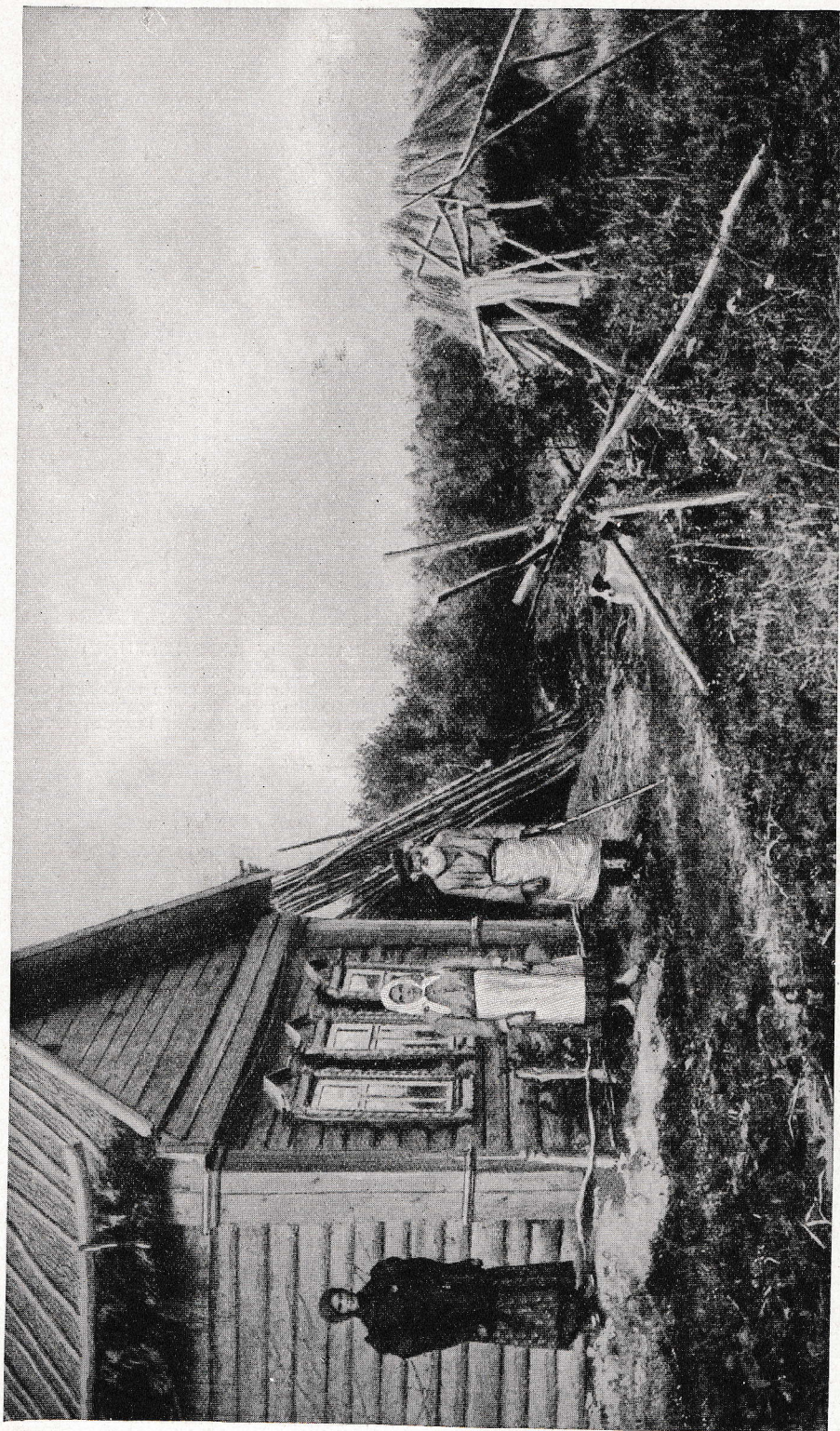
In her mitre-shaped headdress this young Estonian presents an attractive picture. Embroidery is one of the chief handicrafts of these peasant women, and special attention is given to designs on stockings and gloves. These articles figure conspicuously among the regulation gifts presented on marriage, and exquisitely-worked samples may be seen in the National Museum at Dorpat (Tartu)

Photo, Estonian Legation



HOW THE RUNO ISLANDERS CELEBRATE A MARRIAGE

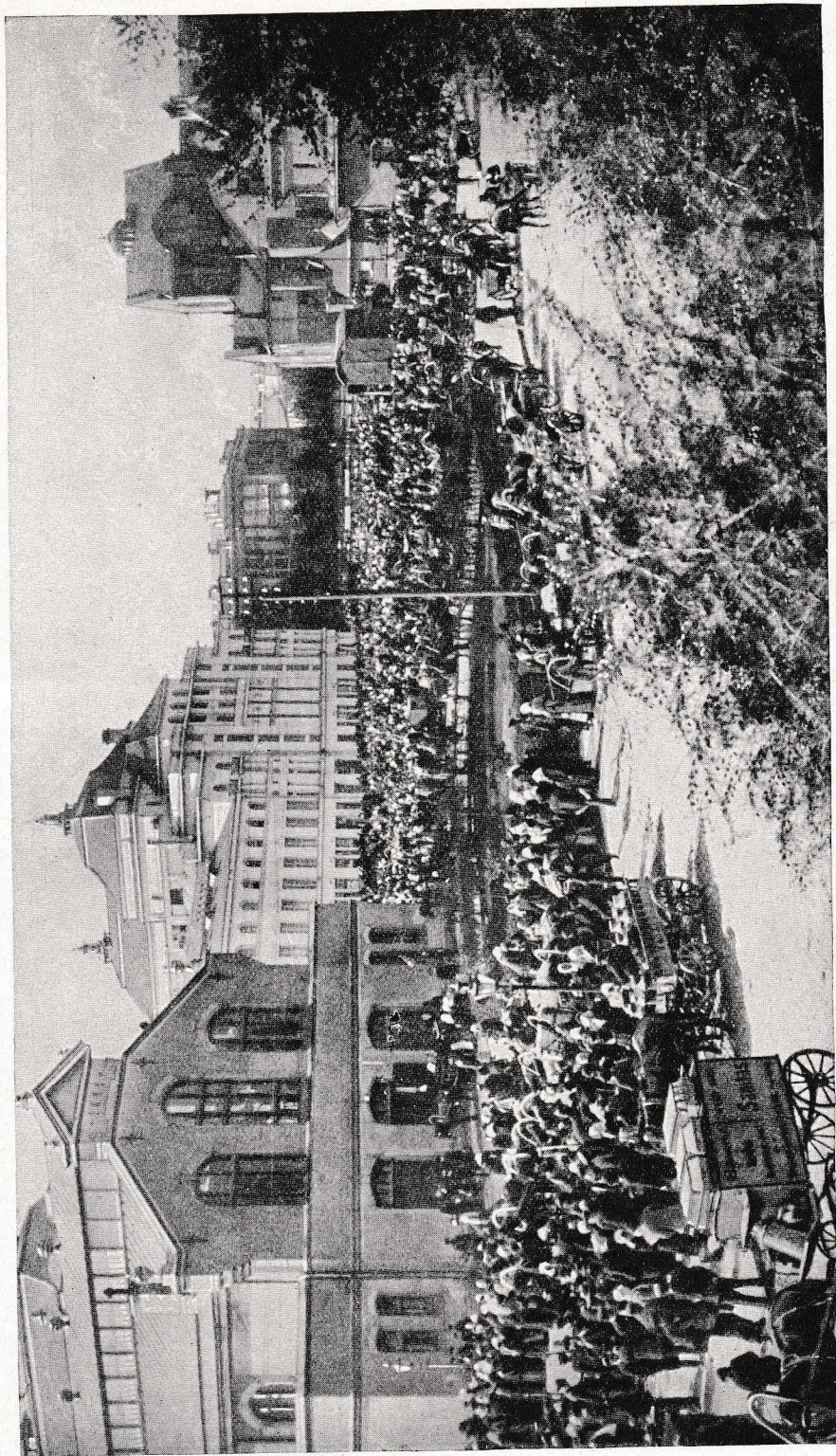
The inhabitants of the small island of Runo, in the gulf of Riga, belonging to Esthonia, still retain a variety of national costume, which, on festive occasions, may be seen to full advantage. This wedding group amply illustrates the "frills and furbelows" in which the young peasant girls delight to array themselves, and the rose-wreaths, which are a special wedding-feast adornment



PEACE AND PLENTY NOW GO HAND IN HAND IN MANY A QUIET CORNER OF ESTHONIA

On the borders of Russia live this ancient couple and their sturdy daughter. The plot of land, which they may now call their own, is tended by their son-in-law, and yields sufficient to supply the modest requirements of the household. Nor need they further fear a ruthless appropriation of their property; the Republic takes good care of its own people, and all Esthonian citizens are equal in the eyes of its law

Photo, Florence Farmborough



BUSTLE AND BUSINESS OF MARKET DAY IN PICTURESQUE REVAL

Reval, or Tallinn, Esthonia's capital and chief port, is divided into an upper and a lower part. The former, situated on the top of a rocky eminence, encloses the government buildings and part of the ancient fortifications. The lower town is of considerable extent, and many important modern and medieval edifices grace its old-fashioned, badly-paved streets. The square in front of the "Estonia" Theatre, the handsome white building seen in the background, is often occupied by dense crowds of countryfolk marketing their wares

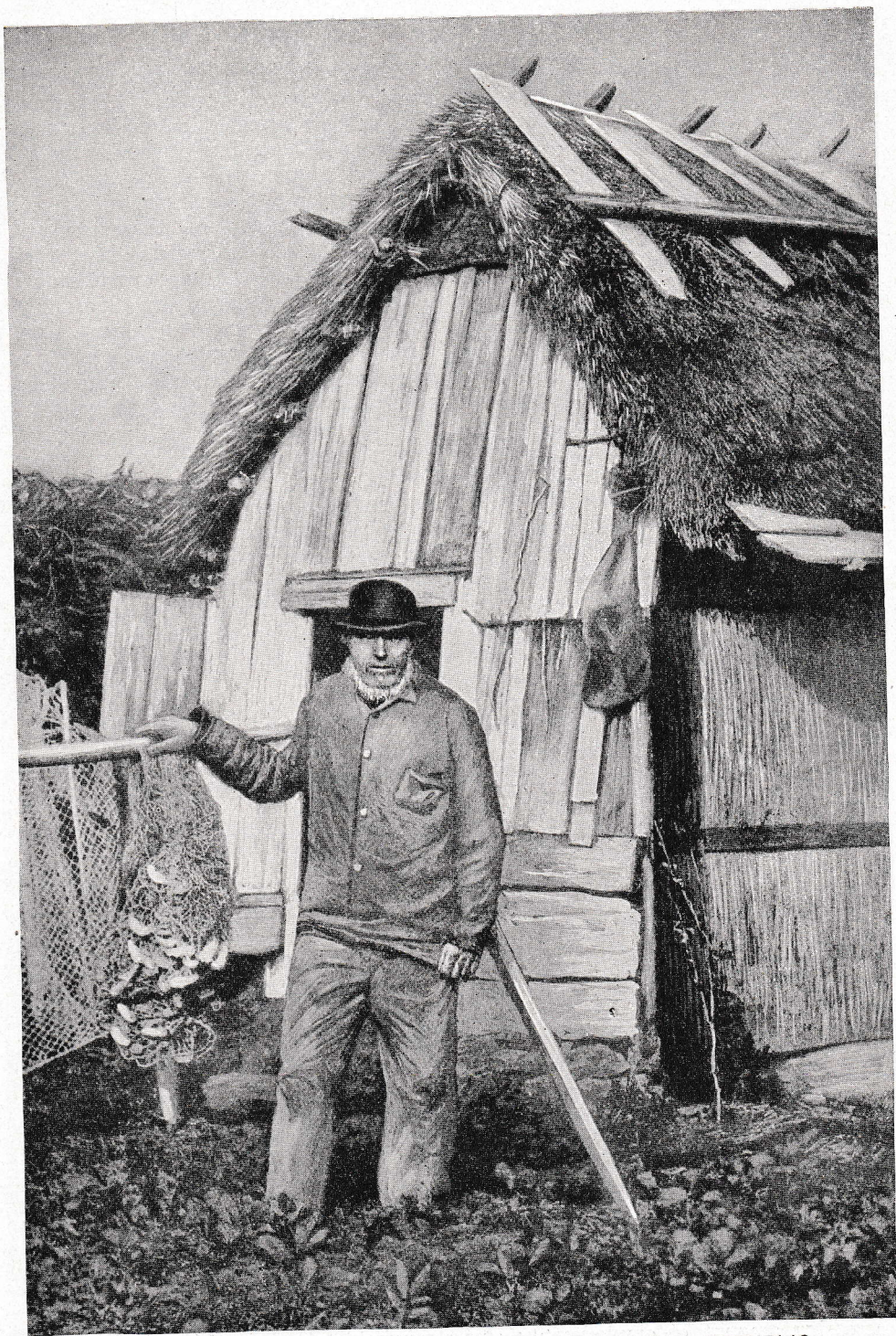
Photo, Esthonian Legation



HUMBLE FOLK OF THE ESTHONIAN COUNTRYSIDE

The careworn face of this Esthonian mother is earnest of past troublous days, and her heart never ceases to be glad that her children are growing up in a free country. They themselves are too young to understand the full significance of the word "liberty," but as time goes on and life broadens out before them they, too, will rejoice at the golden privileges which a republic can offer to her sons and daughters

Photo, Florence Farmbrough



HALE AND HEARTY CITIZEN OF THE ESTHONIAN REPUBLIC

One of the sea-faring folk, whose hardiness can be accounted for, perhaps, by the fact that he is descended from sea-rovers who, some twelve centuries ago, were cruising the waters of the Baltic and instilling fear into the hearts of its shore-dwellers. The voyages of this old Esthonian sailor are now limited to a few sailing trips round the mainland, where his skill as a fisherman stands him in good stead.

Photo, Esthonian Legation

official of business-like aptitude in any government department, one set him down as a Baltic German. The Foreign Office was full of them; it was no uncommon experience, even during the Great War, to be greeted in German on entering an important functionary's room. In the army they climbed quickly to high commands. They were far more industrious than Russians, they worked more steadily, their faculties, though not superior, were under better control. They had rather a contempt for the easy-going Slav.

Time's Whirligig Brings in His Reverages

It would be wise of the Esthonians to make use of the unquestionable talents of the Germans, but so strong is the popular feeling against them, generated by the centuries during which the country was "the nobles' heaven and the peasants' hell," that there is no great likelihood of this being done. Considering their complete supremacy over the rest of the inhabitants up to a few years ago, it is surprising to find that they number less than two per cent. of the population. Seldom has there been such a dramatic reversal of positions as that which has put into power those who were regarded merely as hewers of wood and drawers of water, and has cast down the mighty Germans from their seats. Seldom has there been a more signal triumph of poetic justice. In fairness to these Germans, however, one must admit that they not only farmed the land with intelligence, but also did much to create industries.

Fortune in the Mercantile Marine

There is some manufacture of iron and steel; cotton is woven in fairly large quantities, especially at Narva, where water-power is skilfully used; wood pulp and paper are made; there are many distilleries of potato spirit; leather and cement each give an increasing amount of employment; at Dorpat excellent furniture is turned out. Oil shale is found in large quantities, and looked on as a promising element in the country's future prosperity.

But in the shipping trade the real future of the commerce of Esthonia lies, and her geographical position and considerable coast-line ensure her prosperity as a transit country. Like their hardy sea-roving ancestors, a love of the sea dominates the modern Esthonians, and is portrayed at the present day by the large percentage of the population engaged in a seafaring life. An important and increasing foreign trade is giving Esthonia an opportunity to enhance still further her reputation as a maritime country, and her many navigation schools prove that she is cognisant of the opportunities which the future undoubtedly holds for her in this respect. A comparatively large fleet of mercantile vessels is in her possession, and the new national flag—blue, black, and white in horizontal stripes—is seen flying more and more frequently in many notable ports of Great Britain and other parts of the world.

State Broad Based upon the People's Will

In her titanic struggle for a place in the sun, Esthonia has revealed herself as "a personality, stubborn, upright, and courageous, often oppressed, but never conquered," and there is no doubt but that she will receive the recognition, support, and encouragement from the outside world which she justly deserves.

The Esthonians have everything to hope and nothing to fear from the future; their position is summed up very adequately in the words of one of their countrymen: "The Esthonians," he says, "have never aspired to brilliancy of manner, which is not associated with the northern character, but they are endowed with an inexhaustible patience and endurance, with something of the hardihood of the old Roman Empire-builders, never acting on impulse, but with a prudence which is a sure safeguard for the future. Secure in the stronghold of their self-reliance, the Esthonians may face the future with equanimity. . . . The Republic will remain independent so long as the will of the people demands it."

ESTHONIANS

In Sunshine & Snow



With rake and sickle this Esthonian maid passes swiftly through the woods, eager to take a share in the harvesting of the ripe grain



Thanks to the many agricultural schools in the country, an Esthonian farmer may start his career equipped with a thorough training



In the busy hay-making season the only rest for the land-workers during the hot day comes in the shape of the sit-down midday meal

Photo, Esthonian Legation



Without these voluminous sheepskin coats, worn with the fleece inside, Estonian peasant women could not face the long, hard winter



The national dress of Esthonia would be simplicity itself were it not for the display of silver trinkets on its sleeveless bodice

Photo, Esthonian Legation